

Channelling the message

By [Staff Reporter](#)

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Digital communication channels are many and varied, with options growing almost daily. The Marketing Indaba in Cape Town put the spectrum of these media and effective strategies to master them under the spotlight.

Is traditional branding still relevant?

With the current ocean of digital opportunities and industry focus on all things online, Andrew Welch, CEO of Young and Rubicam South Africa, discussed the importance of traditional branding and how it shouldn't be discounted or disregarded in a digital age.

"It's not an 'either or' world anymore and the idea of marking your territory is no longer relevant," he said. "We are emerging from a global crisis and what happens in one place will have a ripple effect, meaning consumers are less trusting. In addition, Generation Y is promiscuous when it comes to brands, and lacks loyalty."



He cautioned that marketers should never mistake research for insight, pointing out that beauty is elusive and the future cannot be painted in the colours of the past.

The outcomes should therefore be the driver to greater transparency by responding to the cry for authenticity, focusing on the person and not their position, being more about relationships and less on conquests, and listening more and selling less.

To create preference, brand owners need to build a strategy based on customer experience and perception, which will change their behaviour and deliver the desired business results.

"A strong brand still delivers strong results. The brand strategy should create an inordinate preference of the product or service and thereby serve a very commercial purpose."

"It is, however, important not to confuse brand and branding. Brand is the meaning or story and branding is sending out the message or telling the story. What makes for a compelling story is to be different and relevant by going right to the target market and creating impact."

"The art of great brand strategy is making sacrifices as differentiation requires a healthy discomfort," he said.

Real-time marketing

"The battles of the brands are being fought in real time. Marketers have access to a myriad of tools to track the impact that their campaigns are having by the hour. Marketing is both an art and a science. The science component is becoming more pronounced with innovations in technology across all mediums," read the introduction to CEO of Aurimac Media, Will Green's presentation.

Marketing is becoming more and more noisy. It is harder to simplify than to complicate, as a remedy he suggested designing a four-word story or slogan of what differentiates the brand.

Time is also of the essence and organisations that are nimble and can respond quickly will benefit the most. It is also important to know what you are measuring.

Managing innovation

According to Patrick Collings, a partner at Idea Couture, innovation is at the heart of business strategy, but it has to be continuous.

"It's not just coming up with new ideas, but taking them through to their logical conclusion. Brands such as Apple are masters at this, while others like Blackberry have lost their way," he said.

Innovation is far more than just the idea, it's the offering where marketing (or the product and its mode of communication) and innovation (the business model) intersect - thereby creating a symbiotic relationship between the two.

He used the example of Mont Blanc and Bic, which fundamentally serve the same purpose, to explain positioning, which in turn requires research.

"Ethnography is the foundation of innovation research. It leaves the brand behind and looks at what the person wants. It breaks down the silos and looks for convergence by not just focusing on the topic at hand."

"Looking for trends is also leaving times too late. Research needs to look for weak signals where needs are unmet," Collings said.

This brings the process to the point of design thinking, which allows us to unravel complexity and deliver an innovative offering. Thereby move down the knowledge tunnel using heuristics or acquired skills and algorithms or repeated steps.

"It is important to keep on going back to the original concept to ensure your positioning is still relevant. Your positioning becomes irrelevant when competitors' substitutes become good enough for consumers," he said.

Avoiding strategic pitfalls

Speaking on the subject of *faux pas* in strategic formulation and how to avoid them, Sid Peimer, CEO of Stratplanning.com, said strategies most commonly fail because people do not do what we think they will do.

"This is based on two fallacies, namely that people think in a reasonable way and that they can explain their behaviour," he said.

The OJ Simpson trial reinforces his explanation in that although all the jurors believed the celebrity football player was guilty of murder, they still acquitted him.

So how do marketers steer clear of these strategic pitfalls? Peimer listed the top 10:

1. Avoid predicting human behaviour.
2. Don't stick to Einstein's 55/5 rule of spending 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about the solution.
3. Asking why five times and expecting a solution.
4. Getting an E3 error or solving the wrong problem precisely.
5. Searching for the magical insight. Huge insight is not always necessary.
6. Having no brick or story. In other words, what is the story you really want to tell?
7. Trying to explain everything. Good strategy is like a good map, it simply has to take you from one place to another in the most effective way.
8. Thinking things change.
9. Thinking things stay the same. People don't always know what they want until you tell them.
10. Not caring or not showing commitment.

All interactions are contracts

Heléne Lindsay, head of strategy and branding at New Media, maintained that the search for the next big thing seems to have usurped the solid principles that underlie not only marketing but all human interactions. It is easy, she said, to be seduced by the hype around channels, loyalty programmes, big data and social networks.

But what people are looking for in a brand is what they look for in any human relationship, chiefly consistency, character, an alignment between promise and delivery, mutual value and reward and a fierce ally. Lindsay said if you think about it, this is what you want in a romance.

How does this relate to successful content marketing? Well basically by applying all of the above.

Content marketing is also nothing new. It's been around ever since rubber-tyre producer, Michelin, published its first restaurant guide as a means to entice early motorists to use their cars and by extension their tyres, to get out and about. Today the guide is the lodestar to good culinary experiences.

Lindsay said: "Content marketing is the gentle cousin of the marketing family, but serves the same purpose of positioning a brand, driving sales and reconnecting with staff, only through beautifully crafted, expertise-based editorial."

The 2014 Marketing Indaba will be in Johannesburg on 28-29 May and Durban on 5-6 June.

Also see [\[Marketing Indaba: Part 1\] Marketers be \(a\)ware, Generation Y is on its way](#) and [\[Marketing Indaba: Part 2\] Feeling the love: Building brand loyalty in the digisphere](#)

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